

**SECRET**HAIG  
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TO THE WHITE HOUSE  
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SECRET 191202Z APR 72 [REDACTED]  
FM AMB. PORTER PARIS 690

TO THE WHITE HOUSE EYES ONLY FOR DR. HENRY KISSINGER

1. IN FRAMING HANOI'S TWO CONDITIONS FOR RESUMPTION OF PRIVATE TALKS, XUAN THUY WAS CAREFUL TO SPECIFY THE CESSATION OF THE ESCALATION OF THE WAR AGAINST NVN. ALTHOUGH HIS EMPHASIS ON BOMBING PERSUADED SOME CORRESPONDENTS, E.G. RANDALL OF WASHINGTON POST, THAT HE WAS DEMANDING CESSATION OF THE BOMBING AS PRE-CONDITION FOR PRIVATE TALKS.

2. MAJOR TACTICAL REASON FOR THUY'S USE OF BROADER FORMULATION IS TO MAINTAIN FL EXIBILITY SO THAT IF DEEMED EXPEDIENT HANOI COULD START PRIVATE TALKS EVEN WHILE SOME LEVEL OF BOMBING CONTINUED.

3. IN ADDITION, HANOI MAY HAVE ANOTHER MORE SUBSTANTIVE MOTIVATION FOR ITS CHOICE OF WORDS. ANTICIPATING U.S. REJECTION OF DEMAND FOR UNILATERAL DE-ESCALATORY ACTION, YET WISHING TO MAKE BEST PUBLIC USE OF PRIVATE TALKS GAMBIT AT THIS STAGE. HANOI MAY WISH TO SUGGEST THAT THEIR FALLBACK POSITION FOR AGREEING TO PRIVATE TALKS MIGHT BE MUTUAL DE-ESCALATION OF WAR. DESPITE ITS IDEOLOGICAL AND PRACTICAL A VERSION TO MUTUALITY IN ANY FORM, HANOI MAY CALCULATE THAT THEY WOULD NOW STAND TO GAIN BY DISCUSSING SUCH A PROPOSITION, TO GET B-52'S STOPPED: (A) DE-ESCALATION OF GROUND WARFARE WOULD BE LESS EASILY AND QUICKLY VERIFIABLE THAN DE-ESCALATION OF BOMBING; (B) EVEN IF MAIN FORCES REDUCED CURRENT LEVEL OF THEIR OPERATIONS, THEY WOULD STILL RETAIN TACTICAL INITIATIVE FROM VASTLY MORE THREATENING POSITIONS AND MEANWHILE COULD RESUPPLY MORE EASILY, CONSOLIDATE AIR DEFENSES, EXPAND TERRITORIAL CONTROL OR PRG ADMINISTRATION, AND GENERALLY IMPROVE POSTURE FOR RESUMING OFFENSIVE SHOULD PRIVATE TALKS BREAK DOWN, UNDER MORE FAVORABLE MIL ITARY AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS; AND (C) LOCAL VC FORCES, UNDER FICTION THEY WERE NOT UNDER NVN CONTROL, AS WELL AS DRV SOLDIERS (SAIGON 5461) COULD MEANWHILE CONTINUE A HIGH DEGREE OF SELECTIVE INTIMIDATION AND PROSELYTIZING ACTIVITIES WITHIN A NVN AND CIVIL ADMINISTRATION AS PREPARATION FOR POLITICAL STRUGGLE

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THAT MOMENTUM OF U.S. RETALIATION BY-THEN HAVE BEEN INTERRUPTED AND THEIR JUSTIFICATION BECLOUDED, SO THAT RESUMPTION, ON ANYTHING LIKE PREVIOUS SCALE, WOULD BE DIFFICULT.

5. WHETHER OR NOT HANOI INTENDS TO SUGGEST INTENTION OF MUTUAL DE-ESCALATION AS ELEMENT IN ARRANGING PRIVATE TALKS, I BELIEVE THAT THIS POSSIBILITY DESERVES EXPLORATION, IF ONLY TO TEST HANOI'S INTENTIONS WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE NOT MERELY TO START OF PRIVATE TALKS BUT TO MAKING PROGRESS THEREIN. IF RESPONSE IS NEGATIVE, AT LEAST RECORD WOULD BE CLEAR, AND WE COULD MAKE SUITABLE USE OF IT PUBLICLY.

6. THEREFORE SUGGEST THAT YOU CONSIDER MESSAGE TO OTHER SIDE VIA PRIVATE CHANNEL (OR THROUGH USDEL LIAISON OFFICERS IF THAT SEEMS PREFERABLE) ALONG FOLLOWING LINES: (A) WE HAVE TAKEN NOTE OF XUAN THUY'S REFERENCE TO U.S. CESSATION OF ESCALATION OF AIRWAR AGAINST NVN AS CONDITION FOR HAVING PRIVATE TALKS WITH LE DUC THO. (B) USG WOULD BE INTERESTED IN LEARNING WHETHER INTENTION BEHIND THIS STATEMENT WAS TO SUGGEST DRV'S INTEREST IN EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES FOR MUTUAL DE-ESCALATION AS ELEMENT IN ARRANGING MEANINGFUL PRIVATE TALKS LOOKING TO NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. (C) IN ABSENCE OF SUCH INTENTION, IT IS DIFFICULT TO TAKE STATEMENT SERIOUSLY SINCE DRV WELL KNOWS THAT AIR STRIKES AGAINST MILITARY TARGETS IN NVN ARE DIRECT CONSEQUENCE OF, AND IN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO, INVASION OF SVN BY DRV FORCES. (D) USG WOULD OF COURSE BE INTERESTED IN HAVING CLARIFICATION OF XUAN THUY'S STATEMENT IN LIGHT OF POSSIBILITY THAT IT COULD HAVE DIRECT BEARING ON PROSPECTS FOR PRIVATE TALKS AND FOR ASSURING THAT THEY COULD BE CARRIED FORWARD IN PRODUCTIVE ATMOSPHERE. (E) USG AWAITS DRV'S REPLY THROUGH THIS OR ANY APPROPRIATE CHANNEL.

7. AFTER SUITABLE INTERVAL, AND DEPENDING UPON REPLY, NON-REPLY, OR OTHER DEVELOPMENTS, MESSAGE COULD BE RELEASED TO PRESS.

8. BEST REGARDS.

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